



Quarterly Report
INDONESIA: ESTABLISHING DEMOCRATIC CIVILIAN
CONTROL OF THE MILITARY IN INDONESIA
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I. SUMMARY

In the fourth quarter of 2001, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs' (NDI) program on governance and security in Indonesia continued to focus on media strengthening. During the reporting period, NDI collaborated with the Institute for the Free Flow of Information (ISAI) to conduct a seminar on the media's role in the conflict in Aceh. The event examined how reporting on the Aceh conflict is affected by the interests of the military and the armed separatist group, Free Aceh Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, GAM). NDI also published a book entitled *Liputan Dari Lapangan: Oknum, Aparat, Prajurit* (Reports from the Field: Rogue Soldiers, Security Apparatus, Professional Warriors), a compilation of civil-military relations articles written by alumni participants of NDI's civil-military relations journalist trainings. This body of work offers a contemporary chronicle of the state of civil-military affairs before and after Indonesia's democratic transition, and reflects the increasing efforts of civil society to define and document the past. Nearly 500 copies have been distributed to journalists, military officials, leaders of non-governmental and civic society organizations, and parliamentarians.

As its current grant with OTI ends in January 2002, NDI sought to assist its partner, the Indonesian Institute of Investigate Journalism (IIJ) identify a potential donor institution to allow IIJ to continue its work. NDI helped IIJ conduct meetings with the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands to discuss possible partnership.

II. BACKGROUND

Early in his presidential term, Abdurrahman Wahid made several strides towards reform of the military. The police force was separated from the larger armed forces, and the president removed some of the worst human rights offenders from the government. Most notably, in February 2000, Wahid removed General Wiranto from his position as Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security after an Indonesian human rights commission implicated him in the violence in East Timor. However, by early 2001, complications of financial scandal and possible impeachment caught Wahid under siege, and public contempt for the Indonesian Armed Forces

(TNI) resumed a familiar pitch as the TNI gained a more unrestrained hand in the secessionist provinces of Aceh and Papua.

The TNI's position in the impeachment process of Wahid greatly contributed to a rebound in TNI's political influence as the military-police faction in the DPR and MPR played an important role throughout the proceedings that resulted in President Wahid's removal. In February 2001, the military faction voted with the majority in the DPR to accept the Special Committee report on President's Wahid's alleged involvement in financial misconduct and joined the consensus to send the first memorandum to the president. In July, after the standoff between the legislature and the president over Wahid's attempts to replace the national police chief, the military-police faction again voted with the overwhelming majority to advance the Special Session and remove the president. The military's apparent opposition to the president throughout the process seemingly continued a trend of the military's renewed assertiveness in politics. Many political observers regard TNI's support for parliament against Wahid during the constitutional crisis as a debt that President Megawati Sukarnoputri, will not be allowed to forget.

Indonesian media today plays a strategic role in shaping civil-military relations. Since Soeharto's resignation, the press has experienced a period of openness and freedom like no other in recent Indonesian history. Topics that under the New Order were strictly taboo, including the military's role in society, are now freely discussed in all forms of the media. This new freedom allows the media to play a vital role in establishing productive civil-military engagement. In its profession of gathering and disseminating information, the Indonesian media can contribute to an informed dialogue on the military's place in a democracy and help build trust between civilian and military actors. Unfortunately, as a result of years of repressive governance and self-censorship, much of the Indonesian press has little training or background in civil-military or defense issues and remains ill equipped to report effectively on such issues.

Indonesian policy-makers and policy advocates are frequently at a disadvantage due to a general lack of comparable information. There are countless alleged "open secrets" about TNI that are difficult to confirm or quantify. The suspected corruption in the Strategic Forces (Kostrad) owned foundation and the alleged trafficking of narcotics from Aceh-based commands are publicly acknowledged, but little more than speculation is available in the public record. Investigations conducted by way of precise journalistic standards and staunch practices can provide important information to parliamentarians and mobilize public opinion.

One of the needs identified by both NDI and Indonesians themselves for a democratizing Indonesia is to have a larger pool of civilians with expertise in defense and security affairs. Currently, there are only a small number of such people, and most of them have had to study overseas to obtain the appropriate educational qualifications. At this time, there is no graduate program in Indonesia that can produce civilian graduates with this knowledge base and skills. Nonetheless, a democratizing Indonesia needs training for people working in such areas as: (1) the Ministry of Defense, whose important decision-making officials are currently all active or retired military officers; (2) the national legislature (DPR), as professional staff, especially those who might eventually be attached to Commission I (the equivalent of the Defense or Armed Services Committee); (3) provincial governments, as security advisers to governors who, with

the implementation of regional autonomy policy and the state of emergency law, will have greater responsibility for local security; (4) universities, as lecturers and researchers; (5) think tanks, as researchers; (6) mass media, as defense journalists; (7) NGOs relevant to the defense and security sector; and (8) other pertinent institutions.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Seminar on the Role of Media in the Conflict in Aceh

On October 17, in collaboration with the Institute for the Studies on Free Flow of Information (ISAI), NDI held a seminar on “The Role of Media in the Conflict in Aceh”. The event was a venue to analyze the media’s role in the Aceh conflict, and examine how reporting is affected by the interests of the military and the armed separatist group, Free Aceh Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, GAM).

The seminar involved three speakers: Akmal Ibrahim, vice editor of *Serambi Indonesia* in Banda, Aceh; J. Anto, daily coordinator of Media Watch – Educational Information and Publishing Studies - Kippas, Medan; and human rights activist Munir from the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI). Both Ibrahim and Anto described the realities faced by reporters working in Aceh, particularly the serious difficulties involved in prioritizing the public interest in face of intimidation from the military and GAM. The speakers conveyed that the stories relayed by the media are, as a result, the accounts of the proponents of the violence and not necessarily those of the victims. Munir shared with seminar attendees the media tactics of the TNI in Aceh that have transformed media criticism of the military to vilification of GAM in the national press. He noted that elite politics in Jakarta have a greater effect on Aceh than the public is aware of, and that the conflict should be better covered in Jakarta rather than Aceh.

More than 150 participants attended the seminar, most of whom were Acehnese who live in Jakarta. Military and political observers, and members of NGO and civic society organizations were in attendance; and about 20 percent of participants were media professionals. The seminar was covered by several local newspapers, including *Suara Pembaruan*, *Republika*, *Media Indonesia*, *Serambi Indonesia*, and was broadcast twice on *Metro TV*.

Publication of “Liputan dari Lapangan: Oknum, Aparat, Prajurit”

In December, NDI published a book entitled *Liputan Dari Lapangan: Oknum, Aparat, Prajurit* (Reports from the Field: Rogue Soldiers, Security Apparatus, Professional Warriors), a compilation of civil-military relations articles written by alumni participants of NDI’s civil-military relations journalist trainings conducted in 2000 in cooperation with the Dr. Soetomo Press Institute. The trainings sought to enhance the knowledge and skills of Indonesian journalists in investigative journalism with a focus on civil-military relations in a democratic society, and to improve the quality and scope of military coverage by Indonesian media.

The 35 articles compiled in this book serve as a contemporary chronicle of civil-military affairs before and after Indonesia’s difficult democratic transition. As much of Indonesia’s renowned history has been written by its military and political leaders, this body of work not only

reflects the growing competency of professional journalism but also the emerging efforts of civil society to define and document the past. As many of these articles have only been published in regional dailies that were of humble circulation, the publication of the compilation allows a broader readership among members of the local and international defense community as well as political observers interested in the media coverage of Indonesian civil-military affairs.

The book was officially launched on December 10 at NDI's Human Rights Day commemoration, which was attended by more than 200 participants. Since then, nearly 500 copies have been distributed to journalists, military officials, leaders of NGO and civic society organizations, and parliamentarians.

Consultation on IIIJ Proposal to the Royal Netherlands Embassy

NDI assisted its local partner, the Indonesian Institute for Investigative Journalism (IIIJ), to identify a potential new donor institution, the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands. NDI helped IIIJ conduct meetings with the Embassy to discuss possible partnership, and provided technical assistance on its multi-year proposal for submission to the Embassy in early 2002.

IV. RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Seminar on The Role of Media in the Conflict in Aceh

- The media and the NGO community have obtained greater awareness of media coverage in Aceh and the impact of the interests of the TNI and GAM on reporting.

Publication of “Liputan dari Lapangan: Oknum, Aparat, Prajurit”

- Writings of alumni participants of NDI's Professional Journalist Training in Civil-Military Affairs have been compiled and published in a book. The compilation offers a significant record of the development of professional investigative journalism.
- Through the distribution of nearly 500 copies of the book among media professionals, lawmakers, and members of the defense community and of civil society, the writings have reached a broader readership. Recipients have been given an informational resource that bolsters constructive analysis of Indonesia's past and current civil-military relations.

Supporting the Indonesian Institute for Investigative Journalism

- Through its provision of technical assistance, NDI has helped IIIJ strengthen its institutional capability and organizational viability. NDI's work has helped IIIJ gain recognition among the journalist community, various donor agencies, and the public at large. The Institute's support has helped IIIJ advance in developing a collaborative relationship with a potential donor.

V. EVALUATION/CONCLUSIONS

Objective: *To increase Indonesian legislators' and their staff members' ability to understand defense and civil-military issues.*

None of the activities conducted in this quarter were directly related to this program objective.

Objective: *To increase the Indonesian media's capacity to understand and accurately report on defense and civil-military issues.*

- NDI has provided an opportunity for journalists and the general public to discuss the problems media professionals face in reporting on the conflict in Aceh.
- Through the publication of a compilation of civil-military relations articles, NDI has produced an informational resource that draws attention to the modern-day reporting of past and current Indonesian civil-military issues.
- NDI's support has helped sustain and strengthen IIIJ, an organization committed to promoting and improving investigative journalism in Indonesia.

Objective: *To increase Indonesian academic institutions' capacity to conduct research and education on defense and civil-military issues.*

None of the activities conducted in this quarter were directly related to this program objective.

Objective: *To increase long-term dialogue and understanding between the military and members of civil society.*

- NDI has provided the general public with a critical perspective and greater awareness of how media professionals cover the Aceh conflict.
- The publication of civil-military relations articles has provided members of the local and international defense community, lawmakers, journalists, and political observers interested in the media coverage of Indonesian civil-military affairs with a substantive informational resource that relates analytical discussion and varied public opinion on Indonesia's past and current civil-military issues.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

1. Legislative Activities

- NDI will work with Indonesian Corruption Watch (ICW) and Yappika to organize and conduct the international conference on military revenue rescheduled for March 2002.

2. Journalist Professional Development Program

- NDI will publish and circulate an English translation of the book *Liputan dari Lapangan: Oknum, Aparat, Prajurit*.